

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-07
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15
USIA-06 OMB-01 AID-05 ACDA-07 /070 W
-----122314 130612Z /21

R 121228Z AUG 77
FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5394
INFO AMEMBASSY COLOMBO
AMEMBASSY DACCA
AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD
AMEMBASSY KABUL
AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU
CINCPAC
AMCONSUL BOMBAY
AMCONSUL CALCUTTA
AMCONSUL MADRAS

C O N F I D E N T I A L NEW DELHI 11442

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT IN
SUBJECT: MRS GANDHI ON THE COMEBACK TRAIL

REF: NEW DELHI A-74; NEW DELHI 6593; NEW DELHI 6837

1. FOLLOWING MESSAGE IS AN EXPANDED SUMMARY OF AN
AIRGRAM (A-157) BEING POUCHED AUGUST 12 TO ADDRESSEES
ON CURRENT MANEUVERINGS WITHIN THE CONGRESS PARTY:

2. AS WE REPORTED IN THE REFERENCED MESSAGES, MRS.
GANDHI REMAINED ESSENTIALLY IN THE BACKGROUND OF CONGRESS
PARTY AFFAIRS IN THE MONTHS AFTER THE PARTY SUFFERED
ITS DEBACLE IN THE MARCH LOK SABHA ELECTIONS. YET, MOST
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OBSERVERS CONCEDED THAT SHE CONTINUED TO CONTROL THE
CONGRESS FROM BEHIND THE SCENES. IT IS WIDELY
BELIEVED, FOR EXAMPLE, THAT SHE CONTROLS ALL OF THE
PARTY'S FUNDS REMAINING FROM THE LOK SABHA CAMPAIGN.
IN PARTICULAR, THE ELECTION OF HER FORMER HOME
MINISTER, BRAHMANANDE REDDI, AS CONGRESS PRESIDENT
AT THE MAY AICC SESSION WAS VIEWED AS A VICTORY FOR

MRS. GANDHI AND A SETBACK TO THOSE ELEMENTS WANTING TO "CLEANSE" THE PARTY BY PURGING THE FORMER PM AND HER ASSOCIATES.

3. DURING JULY THERE WAS INCREASING SPECULATION THAT MRS. GANDHI WAS BEGINNING TO LOSE HER GRIP ON THE CONGRESS AND IT IS APPARENT THAT OPPOSITION TO HER WITHIN PARTY RANKS WAS BECOMING MORE OUTSPOKEN. PERHAPS OUT OF FEAR THAT THE CONGRESS MIGHT SLIP FROM HER GRASP PERMANENTLY IF SHE CONTINUED HER BEHIND-THE-SCENES ROLE, SHE EMERGED FROM SECLUSION IN LATE JULY AND UNDERTOOK WHAT SEEMS TO BE A COORDINATED AND DETERMINED EFFORT TO STAGE A POLITICAL COMEBACK BY REASSERTING HER CONTROL OVER THE PARTY. THROUGH A SERIES OF STATEMENTS, PUBLIC APPEARANCES AND A HIGHLY-PUBLICIZED VISIT TO ACHARYA VINOBA BHAVES ASHRAM (HERMITAGE) IN MAHARASHTRA, MRS. GANDHI AGAIN IS MAKING NEWSPAPERS FRONT PAGES. AT THE SAME TIME, HER SUPPORTERS LAUNCHED AN EFFORT TO RESTORE HER TO A KEY LEADERSHIP POSITION BY ADVOCATING THE CREATION OF A "TROIKA" COLLECTIVE LEADERSHIP COMPRISING HER, REDDI AND CONGRESS PARLIAMENTARY LEADER CHAVAN. PRO AND ANTI-INDIRA FACTIONS ALSO VIED FOR THE SYMPATHY OF UNCOMMITTED CONGRESSMEN BY CONDUCTING A HIGHLY PUBLICIZED ROUND OF "DINNER DIPLOMACY".

4. HER EFFORTS HAVE PRODUCED AN INTENSIFICATION OF THE
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FACTIONAL STRUGGLES WITHIN THE PARTY OVER HER CONTINUED ROLE. THUS FAR SHE HAS MET STIFF RESISTANCE FROM A SIZEABLE BODY OF OPPONENTS, AMONG THEM REDDI AND CHAVAN, WHO FIRMLY REJECTED THE "TROIKA" CONCEPT, DENOUNCED THE "PERSONALITY CULT" (A EUPHEMISM FOR MRS. GANDHI AND HER "CAUCUS") AND ARGUED FOR TRUE COLLECTIVE LEADERSHIP BASED ON FULL INTERNAL DEMOCRACY. MRS. GANDHI'S RELATIONSHIP WITH REDDI AND CHAVAN IS GROWING DISTINCTLY COOLER. YET, DESPITE THE RECENT REBUFFS SHE SEEMS INTENT ON PURSUING AN INDEPENDENT COURSE IN SEEKING TO RESTORE HER POSITION AND SEEMS TO BE COMPETING WITH THEM FOR PUBLIC EXPOSURE. OBSERVERS HERE AGREE THAT IF SHE PERSISTS IN TRYING TO DOMINATE THE CONGRESS -- AND THERE ARE NO SIGNS OF HER SLACKENING -- THE PARTY WILL ONCE AGAIN INEVITABLY SPLIT.
GOHEEN

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Message Attributes

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Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 12-Aug-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
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